WHEN *the* BLIND SAW

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by

DAVID
deFOREST
BURRELL

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Murmuring over and over, "Nathan! Nathan!" old Elon threw his arms about him and kissed him

WHEN THE BLIND SAW

By

DAVID DE FOREST BURRELL

Author of "Letters from the Dominie," "How They Came to Bethlehem," etc.

With Illustrations by
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To

N. M. B.,

on whom now shines the fulness of "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," this little story is dedicated.

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WHEN THE BLIND SAW

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By David de Forest Burrell

THE little stone house stood on a shoulder of the hill by the Jerusalem road, hard by the sheep-tower; and like an impudent one-eyed beggar leering at some prosperous neighbor, it looked down with its solitary window on the neat homes and bright gardens of Bethlehem, spread along the ridge below. With its one bare room, its crumbling walls, its leaky mud-roof, it was a sorry home; but it was the only home the lad had ever known.

He was lonely and timid; lonely, for he was blind, and his world was small and dark; and timid because his father was wont to beat him for no other offence than that he had been born blind and, therefore, useless. He had grown used to the sound of that harsh voice asking, with a shepherd's wild oaths, "What is a blind son but a burden? What can he do but turn beggar?"

Reiteration being mighty in argument, and the lad growing as lads will, turn beggar he did perforce. This was in his tenth year. Sitting by the dusty road in the hot summer sun, a fierce-eyed shepherd dog by his side, he would stretch forth his hand with a shrill cry as the laden caravans

went by. If perchance a copper rewarded his importunity, he would bring it to his mother, holding it forth timidly, as if it were the only apology he could make for his existence. And, truth to tell, since money also argues strongly, there began to be days when the boorish shepherd and his wife were inclined to feel that as a blind beggar the boy would do more to better the family fortunes than he could have done following the flock. So the Summer passed and the Autumn, and the little fellow was well on the way through his sordid apprenticeship.

But one day something happened. Seated by the roadside, shivering under a pale winter sun,

he grew weary of waiting for laggard travelers. He got to his feet and stretched his cramped little legs. With one hand gripping the dog's shaggy shoulder, the other feeling before him with his little staff, he made his way to the gate of the sheepfold by the tower. It was here that the sacrificial flocks were kept; his father's few sheep were folded over the hill.

The gate of the sacred enclosure was open, and he entered. The silence told him, what he hoped, that the fold was empty. Hurrying across the field to the low tower in the corner, he climbed the few rough steps leading to the top. He felt for the wall, found it, carefully swung his

feet over, and sat with unseeing eyes facing the sloping hills and the town and the wilderness beyond. The winter wind beat against his brown cheeks; his blood tingled with the smart of it. He felt the bigness of the world about him, though he saw it not.

Suddenly came a voice from close beside him: "'Tis a wonderful world, little lad."

Fearful for the moment, he turned a startled face towards his unseen neighbor. Then his fears fled. He knew the voice, had heard it many a time calling the dogs and sheep; it was the kindly voice of Elon, one of the herdsmen who kept the sacrificial flocks.

"It feels like a wonderful

world," he answered simply. "I cannot see it."

"I know thee," said the shepherd; "thou art Nathan, Shama's little blind son. Often have I passed thee when thou sat'st by the roadside begging."

The lad flushed under his dark skin, but he only said, "I am he."

"We shall make better than a beggar of thee some day," said Elon.

"I know not how," returned the lad in his slow, discouraged voice. "What can the blind do but beg? What can I do? Mine own father mocks me when I say I have the making of a shepherd in me."

The man was silent for a moment, watching him with pitying eyes. Then he spoke cheerily: "Some sort of true man thou wilt

be, I know. Jehovah liveth still."

"Can He open mine eyes?"

"That He can," came the bold answer. "I have never seen such a thing, but things came to pass in the day of the prophets; and another day cometh."

"What day?"

"Messiah's day," answered the shepherd, with a ring in his voice that stirred the lad's interest. "Dost not remember? Along this very road from the south came Micah, and looked down from these hills upon our town yonder, and spake of Messiah that He should be born there: 'Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall One come forth unto me that is to be

ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.'"

With kindling eyes the man looked off towards the white-walled town below. "Men say," he continued, "that the time of His coming draweth nigh. The Rabbi in our synagogue saith so. And when He cometh wondrous things will happen. It may be, lad—dost recall Isaiah's words? 'The eyes of the blind shall be opened!'"

The boy's face was lifted up, his sightless eyes shining with a new-born hope. "Dost thou think so truly, Elon? Doth the Rabbi say it? My father's house, thou knowest, is outcast: the Rabbi will not speak to me when he goes by, for it is years since my father went up to one of the feasts. Dost

truly think so? Oh, if He would but come—and touch mine eyes! It is so dark!"

But Elon thrust in a warning: "Thou must not hope too much. It may be that God would teach and use thee through thy blindness. We who see do miss things which thou mayest be given grace to see. Thy soul may have good eyes, if thy body may not. Yet—He will come some day. He may come soon: no man knoweth."

"I understand," cried the boy, nodding his head bravely, though he held it not so high. "I understand. I will try to see with my soul's eyes; and I will pray, too, for sight out of these blind eyes and for the coming of the Messiah. If He should come, and

touch me, and I should see—Tell me, Elon, what shall I see when He cometh? Look out over the hills yonder and tell what thine eyes show thee!"

So the shepherd told him of the world that lay at his feet—of the hills running down to the town nestled on the lower ridge; of orchards, palest green of olives, faintest pink of almonds; of brown gardens and terraced vineyards circling the town; of the valley sinking deep and deeper down to the Dead Sea, whose steely blue waters shone far below through a rocky cleft; of mountains rising, snow-mantled, into the distant blue; of scattered clouds flying overhead. And little Nathan, listening, nodded his

head as he fixed each bit of the landscape in his mind, finding, somehow, a meaning for words that had no meaning in his dark and colorless world.

So began a friendship between the blind boy and the shepherd, a friendship to be strengthened whenever Nathan could steal away from his hated occupation by the roadside and make his way over to the fold where the sacrificial flocks lay by night. It was in the evening that he could go most easily; for if he brought in a copper coin or two by supper-time, none cared where he wandered after dark when there were no more travelers passing by.

Night after night he and the dog were to be found by the shep-

herd's fire. Elon's great baggy sheepskin cloak was big enough for two. Snugly wrapped in it, nestling close to the side of his big friend, Nathan spent many a happy hour. Often the talk was of Messiah; soberly and earnestly the shepherds debated the time of His coming; warmly they speculated on Bethlehem's part in the glorious event; and always, after such evenings, the lad crept home as late as he dared, with tingling ears and throbbing heart, wondering, hoping, praying.

At last it happened. It was a cold night. The wind found its way through the cracks in the wall of the sheepfold when Nathan groped his way to the fire

the men had kindled in a sheltered corner. His father was away, as usual, with his own small flock, over the shoulder of the hill toward Bethlehem. His mother was busy with the care of the lad's wee brother, a babe of a few months. The lad and the dog, sure of their evening, crouched by the fire. The shepherds after a brief "Shalom" said little. A fox barked from the hilltop, and the dogs set up an answering howl, quickly quieted by the threat of Elon's staff. The boy, warm and comfortable, closed his eyelids over his blind eyes and slept.

He was wakened by the dog, cowering at his feet and whining. He sat up. A sudden feeling of mingled fear and joy sent his

heart into his throat. With blind eyes he stared into the darkness, and it was no more dark. He saw!—saw a strange white light, a shimmering glory, in the heavens; saw in the heart of the glory the blinding beauty of an angelic form! And from the angel's lips came the welcome music of the words the lad had so longed for: "Be not afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people; for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

The heavenly light grew brighter. As if attendant angels

He saw! — saw a strange white light, a shimmering glory, in the heavens

but awaited the annunciation, they appeared, in the midst of the splendor, and from their lips came a heavenly strain:

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men
in whom He is well pleased."

They were gone. The last faint echo died away. The brightness faded. The lad's world was dark again. And now he realized that Elon was holding his shoulder in a grip that hurt. He heard, close by, the heavy, sharp breathing of the other men; so he knew that all had seen.

"Elon!" he gasped; "the angels! I saw them—I saw!"

The man drew a long breath.

"I too saw them," he said in an awed whisper, "and heard them. Lad, lad, the Saviour cometh!"

Suddenly he turned to Nathan in amazement: "Dost mean that thou sawest them? Thou?"

The little fellow was sobbing in his excitement. "I did! I did see! But now—O Elon, I see nothing! I am blind still!"

One of the other shepherds stirred. "Canst see the red coals here in the fire?" he asked.

The lad stared into the darkness with unseeing eyes, and cried out pitifully, "Nay, all is dark!"

"But thou didst see the angels," said Elon, his strong comforting arm about the little fellow's shoulders. "It is as I said: he that hath blind eyes can see with

the eyes of his soul. But, O my brothers, my dear lad, why wait we here? Messiah is born! Let us go even to Bethlehem and see!"

Nathan caught at the thought. "Quickly, let us go! It may be, since I saw the angels, I may see the Saviour!"

They were afoot at once, the shepherds with staves in hand, sheepskins thrown back over their shoulders. Out at the gate and down the road they hastened towards the few lights gleaming late in the town below. The blind boy stumbled along, holding fast to the strong hand of his big friend. In the darkness they passed the low wall of a neighboring field. Over it leaned the dim form of a man.

"Whither, brothers?" he called.

At the sound of his voice Nathan shrank close to Elon. "It is my father!" he whispered. The shepherd threw his baggy coat about the lad and drew him closer to his side in the shadows.

"Peace be to thee, Shama," he answered, slackening his stride. "We go to Bethlehem. Didst thou hear what the angel said?"

"Angel," said Shama stupidly. He laughed. "Angel, sayest thou? Naught have I heard save the fox on the hill. What said thy angel?" he asked derisively.

"That in Bethlehem we should find the new-born Saviour, the Christ," called back one of the other men.

Shama laughed again. "Go your ways on your fool's errand," he cried after them; but he got no answer; they were hurrying on down the road.

In the stable under the brow of the hill by the inn they found as the angel had said. A golden radiance shone faintly through the cracks of the heavy door, brightening to a light that for a moment blinded the shepherds as they flung open the door and entered. A moment more and they saw the cattle in their rough stalls, the oil-lamps burning dimly on the floor in a far corner, and there, a little group of people bending over a bundle of white that lay upon the straw. It was the Christ-Child. His mother lay be-

side Him, her fingers caressing one little hand.

Nathan tugged at Elon's sleeve. "The light! The light! Elon!" he cried, "I see it!"

But neither Elon nor any other heeded him. As by one impulse the shepherds stepped forward and knelt before the manger. Nathan, open-eyed, seeing only the heavenly light, clung still to Elon's sleeve, and when he knelt, knelt with him. The mother, lying there, watched with a wonderful light in her eyes and a smile upon her lips but said nothing.

"What sent you hither?" said one at length to the newcomers.

"An angel of Jehovah," answered Elon simply, and straightway told his tale.

They were out in the open country again, mounting the long slope towards their pastures, when Elon noticed the lad's silence. The man's mind had been in a tumult of exaltation. The old Psalms of the fathers rang in his ears; he and his fellow-shepherds had not ceased to sing them and to tell over and over again the glories of the Saviour. Now, suddenly, he noticed that little Nathan at his elbow, trudging sturdily along through the night, was mute.

"Why, lad, where is thy voice?" he asked in joyous reproach.

A sob answered him. Nathan's hand stole further under his arm and gripped it convulsively. "O Elon," said he,

brokenly, "I could not see Him! I saw the light, and I knew He was there, and I tried and tried, but I could not see Him! I am glad He is come—but I wanted to see Him; and I hoped that He would open mine eyes—and—and I am blind still!"

Elon the shepherd must needs walk in silence for full half a hundred paces before he could answer.

"Dear lad," he said cheeringly, "He is but a babe! Wait thou till He shall grow to manhood! Some day He may yet touch thine eyes and open them. Come, forget not that thy soul hath eyes! Sing, sing thou with us, for the Hope of Israel is come! Only be thou patient!"

So up the long road under the stars the blind boy, with tears on his cheeks and tears in his clear young voice, sang with them, and at length slipped in at the door of his sleeping home. And that night he prayed God to give him patience to wait till Messiah should be grown to manhood.

A month and more passed. Nathan had fallen again easily enough into the commonplaces of his little life. Day by day, when winter's storms permitted, his soft, appealing voice assailed the ears of the passer-by. Thus it came about that, crouched under the wall away from the wind, he cried for alms amid the mingled noises of beasts and har-

ness and shouting drivers while a great caravan from the south went by. In the midst of the confusion his quick ear caught the pad-pad of an ass's feet and the shuffle of a man's sandals on the dusty road. He heard a man's voice, and he knew the speaker for a Galilean at the first word.

"The Child is David's Son," the voice said, "and He shall live in David's town where He was born. When He hath been redeemed from the Lord, then return we hither."

And suddenly the heavenly glory shone again before Nathan's blind eyes. It was gone almost as quickly as it had come; all was dark; and he was

left standing with outstretched hands while the noise of the caravan receded in the distance.

It was Elon again who, when the lad told him that evening, cleared up the mystery. "It is Joseph of Nazareth and the Babe's mother," he said, "taking the little one to the Temple to present Him to the Lord according to the Law. Wait, lad! They will return in a day or two."

And so they did. To little Nathan, sitting with ears alert for sounds from the north, there came again the patter of the ass's feet, the shuffle of sandals, and even, this time, the cry of a child; and then—the light shone again and brought him to his feet with a happy cry.

The travelers halted. The boy heard Joseph saying something —he knew not quite what—to him. The light was still before his eyes, shining white and clear. His lips moved, but he could not speak. A coin touched his palm; then he found his voice.

"Art thou not Joseph of Nazareth?" he asked breathlessly.

"Thou sayest," returned the man.

"And—thou hast the Babe—the Saviour—with thee?"

The mother, seated upon the ass, arms cradling the Child, answered Joseph's look of amazement.

"It is the little lad who came with the shepherds to the stable," she said softly. She leaned to-

wards him. "Tell us," she commanded with kindly voice, "thou art blind?"

"I am blind."

"Yet thou didst know us when we came by?"

He did not hesitate. "I have sharp ears," he said, "and the light came."

"The light?"

"The glory. I saw it on the hills; I saw it again in the stable; and once more when ye went north I saw it."

She nodded. "I, too, have seen it," she said, "and now?"

"It is here," he answered eagerly, "a great brightness before my eyes. So I know: but"—and his voice fell—"I cannot see the Babe."

"Stretch forth thy hand," she said.

He put it forth quickly. She took it and guided it until it rested on the Babe's cheek. The sensitive finger-tips touched gently, gently, the rounded cheeks, the soft little chin, and as gently withdrew. The blind boy stood speechless, face aglow. They watched him for a moment; then Joseph took the leading rope in his hand.

"The Lord be with thee," he said: and the mother echoed the words in her soft voice.

"And with you both," said Nathan.

That night he stole across to tell Elon. "And this is the strange thing," he said: "when I

touched the Babe, the light failed; and when I took my hand away it came again."

The shepherd pondered for a time.

"I know," he ventured, at length. "Thou seest the light with thy soul's eyes; but thy hands are the eyes of thy body; and when thou didst touch the Christ it was as if thou sawest with thy body's eyes. Thou knowest that together the flesh and the spirit see not."

"What will happen, Elon, when He shall open mine eyes?"

"Thou wilt see the light no more, but only the Christ Himself."

"That will be better," said the lad cheerfully.

And that night he prayed again for patience to wait till the Christ should be a man.

It seemed as if one had but to wait by the roadside and things were sure to happen. Only a day had passed when his ears caught the jingle and creak of the harness of camels. With the murmur of strange voices high in air, the strident shouts of the drivers, the grunting of the soft-footed beasts, they passed rapidly on towards Bethlehem, the tinkle of the bell at the throat of the last camel growing fainter and fainter and dying away at last. Nathan's father, Shama, told at supper who the riders were: Wise Men from the East, he had heard at the

watering-trough by the well. They were looking—and he smiled derisively—looking for a child born King of the Jews. They wanted to worship Him.

Shama laughed hoarsely. "Elon hath a fool's tale," he croaked; "there was a babe born in the stable at the inn during the census-taking: and he saith it is the Christ—saith the angels told him so! I say, a poor Christ, born in a stable!"

Nathan sat silent, afraid yet eager to tell all he knew. The mother, with a fretful child upon her knee, did not appear to be interested.

That night it stormed, and Nathan, with a score of questions on his lips for Elon's ears, must

needs save them through the long day that followed. Then, the frugal evening meal over, he waited his chance, slipped quietly out of the house, and hastened across the slope to the sheepfold.

The flocks were in; the man at the gate opened to him. Over the soft sounds of the fold he heard the shepherds' voices in animated talk. Carefully he threaded his way among the resting sheep towards the far corner, till he felt Elon's hand catch his staff. He let himself be guided to a seat by his big friend's side.

"I knew thou wouldst come," was his greeting. "So thou hast heard of the Wise Men?"

"Yea, truly," said the lad eagerly. "I heard them pass; and

father told me they sought the Babe. They must have found Him, Elon; but all day I have watched for their return, and they have not come."

"They did find Him truly," returned the shepherd. "I have been to the town this day, and I have heard from the lips of the porter at the inn all that happened. They found the Babe, and worshiped Him, and brought forth gifts fit for a King; the porter saw it. He saith the Babe's mother put a little gold casket in His hands, and He let it fall——"

"And then?"

"Why, lad, here is the strangest of all. In the night they left the inn, and are gone no man knows whither."

"Who are gone?"

"The Wise Men, and the Babe and Mary and Joseph," Elon answered. "The porter saith the Wise Men roused him at midnight. He opened for them, and they took the road to the south. Then, before dawn, came Joseph with the Babe and His mother, and they too turned toward the south."

The lad was silent, as if unable to grasp what had been said. Overhead the moon shone out between scudding clouds. The air blew soft from the south, whither the Babe had gone.

A few days later a terrible thing befell. It was noonday, and Nathan sat on the threshold in the

wintry sunlight, when he heard the tread of heavy feet and the clash of arms. He knew who came, men of the Roman garrison lodged in Herod's castle on the hill beyond the town. He had always taken a fearful joy in hearing them pass, feet tramping so firmly, armor clashing so warlike. There were not many this time, only a quaternion, his ears told him. They came up the hill towards the house and stopped before the door. When they went clanging down the hill again, the mother, quiet with an awful grief, sat beside a tiny bleeding body; while Shama and the little blind Nathan stood in the road pale and sweating with helpless rage, the father's hoarse curses and the

lad's shrill ones flying together on the winter wind to join the wails and execrations of bereaved homes in the town below.

They left the little house on the hill after that. The mother could not bear to stay. The sheep were sold, the scanty household goods packed on an ox-cart, and the three went over the hills to the Holy City and there took up their abode.

The years passed. Shama, the surly, had turned porter in the wool market, where he picked up a precarious living. Nathan had grown into tall and stalwart manhood, but still fit, as his father often bitterly complained, for naught but begging at the Temple

Gate. Day after day, year after year, he sat there, seeking a sunny spot when the sun shone, a sheltered corner when the wind was searching, calling ever upon the passer-by for alms.

And still, despite the years that had passed, the memory of the strange happenings of that winter in Bethlehem did not fade from his mind. Often as he sat in his nook by the Temple Gate he whiled away the idle hours with his musings on the Saviour. When he had reached his tall, slim young manhood he thought to himself, "The Christ is ten years old! He will be as tall as my elbow by now." And a year or two later, with a sudden thrill, he thought, "The Christ is

old enough to come to the Feast!"

It was during that very Passover week that he saw the heavenly light, once and again, while the crowd thronged the Temple steps. But the press was so great that, search as he would with tapping staff, he could not find the boy Christ. Yet it made his heart beat light again, and the blind beggar's prayer, nightly offered through all those years, was offered with increasing hope.

After that the years, though still dragging slowly enough, had their weary length shortened by an occasional shining of the glory before Nathan's blind eyes. It came now and then during one of the great Feasts, when all Is-

rael flocked to the Holy City. His eyes would be flooded with a momentary radiance; a hammering pulse would beat in his throat; but always the end would be the same—darkness and a vain searching for the Christ who had passed in the crowd.

"Wait," he would whisper to himself, remembering old Elon's counsel; "wait! The Christ is as tall as I am now. Soon His day —and mine—will come!"

In the Temple and on the streets his quick ears began to catch a fresh note in the gossip of the day. Shama brought it now and again from the lips of porters and merchants in the wool market. It was about a new prophet, John by name, who had stalked

out of the Judaen hills with the burning cry, "Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" And though priest and Pharisee scoffed, the blind beggar knew what it meant.

He was not at all surprised when he heard the newest and strangest reports. All Jerusalem was agog over them. They told of another prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, who was going about working mighty wonders, claiming to be the Christ. And though he thought his heart would burst as he listened, Nathan answered the gossip-monger quietly enough, "The Lord is not slack. His time is near at hand."

On a certain day he sat in the doorway of the little home down

in the heart of the city. It was the Sabbath; and he might not beg. Above him, could he have seen it, the Temple hill rose in white majesty, crowned by the Temple itself with glittering pinnacles piercing the blue.

He heard the murmur of voices and the clack of sandals coming up the street. He wondered idly who it might be. Then—the light! It shone in upon his darkness, and he sat as if fixed to the doorstep, unable to rise for the trembling in his limbs! He awoke suddenly to the fact that the sound of steps had ceased and a voice was speaking. He caught the words, "I am the Light of the World." A hand was laid upon his eyes, anointing them with

something moist and cool; and a voice said: "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam!"

The speaker was gone. The light had faded. Nathan the beggar, alone upon the steps, felt for his staff, got to his feet, and hastened, tapping, tapping on the cobbles, down the street. Deaf to the angry expostulations of those he jostled, unmoved by the curses of a portly Pharisee, on he went, out at the city gate, down the hillside, until, stumbling along the broad stone steps that led to the placid pool, he threw himself prone by its brink and plunged his face into its cool waters.

He had known what men meant by such words as light and dark-

He threw himself prone by its brink and plunged his face into its cool waters

ness since the night when the heavenly glory had first shone in upon him; but never had he known the meaning of the blue of the sky, the green of Olivet, the warm whiteness of the Temple walls and the golden radiance of their sun-kissed pinnacles, until now, when he slowly climbed the stairs and looked about him on a new world. He joyously drank it in through his eyes.

"And now," said he to himself, "to find the Christ, that I may see Him with these eyes!"

A dark night, without a moon, had fallen on the hills above Bethlehem. The sheep lay huddled together. Except for their soft breathing, and the whistle of

the wind through the chinks in the wall, no sound broke the stillness. Sheltered in a corner of the fold, Elon, wrapped in his sheepskin coat, hugged the embers of the slowly dying fire and dozed away the hours.

On a sudden one of the dogs beside him lifted his head with a low growl. The old shepherd straightened himself and listened. There was a sound of footsteps drawing near the fold. Whoever it was, he had left the highway and was approaching with steady stride as one who knew the way even in the dark. Elon heard him fumbling at the gate. At a word the dogs crouched silent, waiting. The man entered and came toward the fire, a dark form dimly

seen, threading his way among the sheep.

"Shalom," he said, when at length he stood before Elon.

"To thee also peace," returned the old shepherd.

The man seated himself by the fire. He was a stranger, though his voice seemed somehow familiar. The dogs smelled of his clothes, appeared satisfied, and lay down again, with their heads on their forepaws, watching him. The fire gave still enough light to show his face, strong and kindly, and to reveal a pair of eyes looking into Elon's like those of a familiar friend. Who could this be?

At length the stranger broke the silence: "Thou art the keeper of the sacred flock?"

"One of the keepers."

"Hast been here long?"

There was a ring of honest pride in Elon's voice as he answered, "Twoscore and ten years have I herded on these hills."

"And hast never lost a sheep?" the other's voice asked in gentle raillery.

"Never," said old Elon quietly.

The stranger's tone altered. "I passed an old house on the road yonder; 'tis a lonely place for men to dwell."

"No man dwelleth there," said Elon. "It hath stood empty now these thirty years."

"And thou didst know them that dwelt there?"

Elon eyed him in silence for a moment. The question did not

seem altogether an idle one. It came into his mind that the familiar thing about the stranger was his voice.

"Yea," said he at length; "I knew them."

"Beggars, from the look of the place," said the stranger carelessly.

The shepherd answered slowly, "One was a beggar."

The other rose to his feet. "Friend," he said, "the night is far spent, and I have a vow to pay at sunrise. If thou wilt, I will rest by thy fire."

"The fold is thine," said Elon; and the two wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down to rest. It was long, however, before the old shepherd slept. Be-

fore his eyes was the face of the stranger, and in his ears rang the familiar voice; but he fell asleep with the puzzle still unanswered.

He woke at the first break of day to find the stranger's place by the dead fire empty. He rose and looked about him. The man was on the tower, eyes fixed on the eastern horizon. Elon climbed the steps and stood beside him.

"Peace, on this new day," he said.

The other turned with the words, "And to thee," and again he faced the sunrise.

The gray of the east had changed to rose, and the western heavens gave answer in paler tints. The valleys lay shadowed in the growing light, the should-

ers of the hills by Bethlehem were silvered, the eastern mountains rose dark against the glowing sky. Then suddenly the ragged edge of the mountains, cutting the sky, was rimmed with gold, and the sun rose, bathing the world in glory. The white walls of Bethlehem gleamed golden; the pale olives, too, were warmed into gold; the green gardens and vineyards shone golden; the very rocks and greensward at the foot of the tower seemed glorified.

The stranger pointed down towards the foot of the hills, where through deep rifts the silvered waters shone.

"The Sea of Salt?" he asked.

"Yea," said Elon, more deeply puzzled than ever. Who could

this be, that he knew the way to the fold in the darkness, yet knew not the Dead Sea?

The man's eyes scoured the world; his face glowed with feeling.

"O my friend," he said at last; "tell me of what we see. That is Bethlehem at our feet? And the great tower and castle on the hill beyond, what are they?"

"Herod's new castle," said Elon; and as he had done once long before, he told the story of the hills of Bethlehem and named the distant mountains beyond the valley. The stranger said not a word, but drank it in eagerly, his eyes, brighter than any Elon had ever known, resting on this spot and that, but dwelling long-

est on the white-walled town. Suddenly he threw back his head and, drawing a deep breath, turned to Elon a shining face.

"The sun hath risen," said the shepherd, remembering; "and thou hast a vow to pay."

The man laughed softly; but quickly, with sobered face, said, "My vow is paid, friend shepherd. It was that I should look upon this scene from this tower. All these years, these long, dark years, have I waited—"

Elon's gaunt frame began to tremble. "Who art thou?" he asked.

The stranger smiled at him. "That was not the whole of my vow," he said. "It was, too, that I should see a certain old shep-

herd and have him tell me about Bethlehem and the hills and the Salt Sea—"

Elon gripped him by both shoulders. "Who art thou?" he cried hoarsely.

The stranger looked into his face steadfastly for a moment, and said simply, "O Elon, I am he that was blind, and, behold, I see!"

"Art thou Nathan?" cried the shepherd. "Joy of my life, to see thee once again and see thee so!" And with tears upon his furrowed cheeks, murmuring over and over, "Nathan! Nathan!" old Elon threw his arms about him and kissed him.

So stood the two men on the hillside among the grazing sheep.

"I told thee, long ago," said Elon, "that in His own time the Christ would open thine eyes. And He hath done it. Now what?"

Nathan's face was grave, but his look was full of exaltation.

"Now," he made answer, "now have I given for His use these eyes of mine, for ever."

"Amen," said Elon; "and I, too, with mine old eyes, here herding the sheep."

With sudden tears of joy he laid his hand on Nathan's shoulder. "Dost remember how we sang, that night, returning from the inn? So let us sing again."

And there on the hillside, among the sheep, while the sun shone down upon the white walls

of Bethlehem, their song rose upon the air:

"O give thanks unto Jehovah, for
he is good;
For his loving kindness endureth
forever."

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